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P 261205Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3653  
INFO RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5810  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3518  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3380  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4052  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1210  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4023  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001369

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN; EEB; NEA/IR  
ENERGY FOR EKIMOFF/BURPOE/COHEN  
COMMERCE FOR EHOUSE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [EINV](#) [RS](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RUSSIAN MEDIA LIKELY DISTORTED ENERGY SECTOR  
RESHUFFLE

REF: ASHGABAT 1295

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) A number of international media outlets, initially Russian, have linked recent changes in the Turkmen energy sector's leadership (reftel) with allegations that high-ranking oil and gas officials had passed classified geological data, related to the South Yoloten field, to foreign companies. In Turkmenistan, the recent Russian media reports were seen as nothing more than Russian sensationalism designed to discredit Turkmenistan. Rumors about a reshuffling among the Turkmen oil and gas leadership were already circulating in Ashgabat months before President Berdimuhamedov's recent announcement of the changes. According to a Ministry of Oil and Gas official, the new appointments reflect the intention of recently appointed Deputy Chairman for Oil and Gas Baymyrat Hojamuhammedov's to create a new team of oil and gas leaders.

13. (SBU) Turkmen energy experts pointed out that Turkmennebit (the state oil concern) and the Turkmen State Oil and Gas Construction Concern, the chairmen of which were replaced, had nothing to do with South Yoloten. They added that Berdimuhamedov appointed a new chairman to head Turkmengaz because that position had been vacant for three months.

14. (SBU) COMMENT. The Gaffney Cline audit of the South Yoloten field remains the most competent assessment of its potential reserves. While there are doubts among some experts regarding the completeness of the data used in the audit, experts from local state companies and foreign companies working in Turkmenistan generally think the Gaffney Cline results are realistic. Concerning the personnel changes, it seems unlikely that high-ranking officials, likely under the close eye of Turkmen law enforcement and security services, would risk passing classified information to foreign companies. In fact, almost all Turkmen officials avoid talking to foreigners because they do not want to leave themselves open to suspicion. END COMMENT.

